In the two analytical documents I presented for the Assembly's consideration and in the draft resolution, we have taken fully into account previous decisions of the General Assembly on the revitalization issue, as an essential element of our current initiatives in this critical area. We have also sought to set up a viable framework for long-term action aimed at continuing the revitalization process, as a means of ensuring that the General Assembly can effectively meet contemporary global challenges. Therefore, the draft resolution creates various windows of opportunity to continue the work on relevant issues during this session of the General Assembly and establishes a schedule for the consideration of further steps so that the momentum for revitalization can be maintained.

We have, as a result of the positive feedback and the agreement of Member States for our two-pronged approach to revitalization, reflected this format in the draft resolution. Therefore, the annex sets out our proposals in two clusters: "Enhancing the authority and role of the General Assembly" and "Improving the working methods of the General Assembly". I think it important to emphasize, however, that the two clusters are interrelated in a complementary way. By improving its working methods, the Assembly should have a more focused and meaningful debate and take more effective action on critical global issues, thus enhancing its role and authority.

Significant commitments have been made in this draft resolution, demonstrating that the Assembly is committed to a course of action that should lead to far-reaching and critical advances in that key area. Greater support for the Office of the President, more focused debates and a shorter agenda are but examples of the areas in which commitments have been made. We must bear in mind, also, that the draft resolution incorporates several operational decisions that require us to take immediate action, and others that will significantly change the work of the General Assembly over time.

For clarity of purpose, I wish to make a further, and very minor, modification in the draft resolution. It is to place the words "at its fifty-eighth session" after "President of the General Assembly" in paragraph 5 in part B of the annex.

Taken together, the proposals in the draft resolution will give significant impetus to our initiatives to revitalize the General Assembly. Importantly, it will covey an unequivocal message that the Assembly is resolved to perform effectively the functions expected of it by the Charter of the United Nations, meet the expectations of the world's people and further strengthen the United Nations.

It is important that I take this opportunity to express my deep appreciation to the six facilitators — Ambassador Abdallah Baali of Algeria, Ambassador Stafford Neil of Jamaica, Ambassador Dirk van den Berg of the Netherlands, Ambassador Kishore Mahbubani of Singapore, Ambassador Roman Kirn of Slovenia, Ambassador Dumisani Kumalo of South Africa — for their outstanding work in bringing this process to fruition. I also wish to thank all Member States and the members of the Secretariat for their full cooperation in this process.

I urge all members now to reaffirm their support for the revitalization of the General Assembly through their consensus support of this draft resolution.

The General Assembly will proceed to consider draft resolution A/58/L.49/Rev.1, as orally revised.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Ms. Kelley (Director, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council Affairs Division): I should like to make an oral statement on the programme budget implications of the draft resolution, which we have circulated in the Hall and which will eventually be issued as an "L" document.

I would like to inform members that, under the terms of paragraphs 10 and 11 of part A of the annex to the draft resolution, the General Assembly would decide that:

> "10. The resources available to the Office of the President of the General Assembly in personnel and other support shall be augmented from within existing resources, bearing in mind the provisions of paragraph 22 of the annex to resolution 55/285. Five additional posts shall be made available to supplement current support, of which three shall be filled on an annual basis, following consultations with the incoming President, beginning at the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly.
>
> "11. Transitional office accommodation and other support shall be provided to the

President-elect of the General Assembly". And the paragraph continues.

With regard to paragraph 10, two posts — one P-3 and one P-4 — have been identified within the existing establishment of the Department for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Management. The staff on those posts, while remaining in the Department, would be designated to provide substantive and analytical support to the Office of the President in order to have the continuity and institutional knowledge and expertise that are sought. There will be no additional cost associated with those two staff. Upon consultations, it is understood that the remaining three positions referred to in paragraph 10 would be at the D-2, D-1 and general service-other levels, respectively. Those positions would be employed on a temporary basis for the period of the terms of office of the President: a 12-month period. It has not been possible to identify vacant posts to accommodate those requirements. Therefore, the costs associated with the three positions would represent additional costs over and above those already proposed in the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005. These costs on a two-year basis would amount to $948,000, including $739,900 under section 1, Overall policy-making, direction and coordination, and $208,100 under section 29D, Office of Central Support Services.

With regard to paragraph 11, suitable office accommodation has been identified within the Secretariat premises to be reserved for the President-elect for the period July-September each year. The costs associated with maintenance of those premises would be met during the biennium 2004-2005 from within existing resources under section 29D, Office of Central Support Services.

Under the terms of paragraphs 1, 2, 4 and 5 of part B of the annex to the draft resolution, "Improving the working methods of the General Assembly", the Assembly would allow the General Committee to meet throughout the session on an open-ended basis to advise the Assembly on the efficient organization, coordination and management of the work of the Assembly and would request the Secretary-General to prepare a number of reports for consideration by the General Committee.

With regard to paragraph 1 of part B, and other paragraphs related to the work of the General Committee, every effort will be made to schedule the meetings of the General Committee at a time when the existing capacity of the Department for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Management could allow for providing such services on an as-available basis. On that understanding, it is anticipated that the costs associated with these additional meetings would be met from existing resources.

As regards the requested reports — paragraphs 2, 4 and 5 of part B — those would be prepared from within the existing resources of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management.

In summary, adoption of draft resolution A/58/L.49/Rev.1 would call for additional expenditures for the biennium 2004-2005 in the amount of $948,000. Every effort will be made to absorb those costs. Actual and projected costs relating to these requirements would be reported to the General Assembly in the context of the first budget performance report for the biennium 2004-2005.

The President: I would like to inform members that the statement just read out by the Secretariat has been distributed in the Hall and will be circulated as an official document of the General Assembly under the symbol A/58/643.

Before I give the floor to the speaker in explanation of vote before the vote, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): Only six weeks have transpired since you, Mr. President, spoke before the Assembly, expressing your firm resolve to present before the Assembly a draft resolution of the President on an issue close to the heart of each Member State. You have successfully vindicated your pledge before this house. We pay tribute to you for that reason. The facilitators, the distinguished ambassadors that you have mentioned, also deserve high praise and appreciation for their hard work and coordination.

We have been able to arrive at a consensus. It has not been easy. It has entailed accommodation, understanding and compromise. Credit for it is owed to all concerned delegations and regional groups. The extent of flexibility that the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) as a group has demonstrated and has received from other regional groups, including the European

Union and the delegations of the United States and of the Russian Federation, also deserves our special commendation. I shall refrain from making any comments on the two clusters of revitalization issues already negotiated extensively and very efficiently by my good friend Abdallah Baali on behalf of NAM. However, I do add my voice to the many who have reiterated that the draft resolution and its contents may not reflect all that we had individually — or as a group — aspired for. But it most definitely has culminated in the optimal and best result that we could achieve this time around.

It is with this conviction that Bangladesh joins the consensus on this draft with great confidence and optimism. We are pleased to see at least three recommendations of key interest to my delegation find their due place in the draft decision: the strengthening of the Office of the President of the General Assembly, enhancing the public outreach of the General Assembly and a reaffirmation of the complementarities of the roles of the General Assembly and the Security Council. As Chair of the Committee on Information, I would like to assure you of my fullest cooperation with all efforts towards better publicizing the work of the General Assembly in the interest of the common man.

What we need to focus on now is how best to implement the actions called for in the decision, as our peoples look to us for further direction. The revitalization process is continuous and seamless, requiring substantive support, both financial and political, by the Member States, the Secretariat and the other principal organs of the United Nations, including the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. We look forward to working closely with all concerned in that exercise.

Before I conclude, may I offer you, Mr. President, Bangladesh's wholehearted support in all your initiatives and those of the Secretariat in fulfilling the mandate of this decision during the coming months.

The President: We have heard the only speaker in explanation of vote before the vote.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/58/L.49/Rev.1 as orally revised.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/58/L.49/Rev.1 as orally revised?

Draft resolution A/58/L.49/Rev.1, as orally revised, was adopted (resolution 58/126).

The President: Before giving the floor to the speakers in explanation of position after the adoption of the draft resolution, may I remind delegations that such explanations are limited to ten minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Spatafora (Italy): I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the European Union. The acceding countries Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia, the candidate countries Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey, the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries of the European Economic Area, Norway, Liechtenstein and Iceland, as well as the countries of the stabilization and association process and potential candidates, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro, align themselves with this statement.

We warmly welcome the adoption of the present resolution. Now it is our common responsibility to ensure the implementation of its provisions, since all Member States are the owners of the ongoing United Nations reform process.

Mr. President, this achievement is a tribute to your strong leadership in conducting the deliberation sessions, thanks to which we were able to agree on this important resolution by consensus. For this, the European Union wishes to express its most sincere gratitude and support for your two-stage approach, consisting of a well-balanced package of pragmatic proposals and the programme of work for additional measures to be furthered considered before final decision. We are particularly pleased that firm deadlines have been added for the General Committee's specific recommendations and the plenary's expected decisions.

We have to maintain the new momentum in the General Assembly reform process and show our continued collective political will and determination to strengthen the authority and role of this central United Nations organ in its functions and powers as defined by the relevant provisions of the Charter.

Furthermore, the European Union believes that this resolution takes a meaningful step towards rationalization of the General Assembly's working

methods, helping to make its outcomes more efficient and effective.

We would also like to strongly commend the six facilitators and the Member States which participated in the consultations over the past few weeks and contributed their proposals. Their active interest and constructive attitude further attests to the wide commitment of the membership to strengthen the United Nations. Their contribution has been outstanding.

The present resolution is an important building-block in the current United Nations reform process. We reaffirm our intention to contribute actively to the ongoing United Nations comprehensive reform process and our deeply rooted commitment to work for an effective multilateralism with a strong United Nations at its centre. Improving the efficiency and effectiveness of United Nations bodies, policies and processes will continue to be a priority of the European Union.

Mr. Kennedy (United States of America): My delegation wishes to commend the hard work of the President of the General Assembly, Julian Hunte, and his colleagues, and their dedication and drive in continuing the critical work of reforming the United Nations General Assembly. Our principal regret is that their efforts and commitment were not matched by those of the membership in general.

This resolution, while moving us forward, does not fully achieve the goal of revitalizing the work of the General Assembly. Unfortunately, this resolution, despite the President's efforts, does not go far enough in the direction of the reforms required to truly re-energize this institution. Member States must accept bolder efforts and sign on to more courageous initiatives to revitalize its work rather than watering down proposals before them; otherwise, the General Assembly risks sliding into irrelevancy.

The steps called for in this resolution must be significantly enhanced to demonstrate the Member States' real commitment to the genuine reform of the General Assembly's agenda and practices. The membership of the Assembly needs to do better, to breathe new life into its agenda. It is cumbersome and overloaded, and it needs to be drastically reduced. Redundant and repetitive items that result year after year in nearly verbatim repetitive resolutions must be culled from the agenda through biennialization, triennialization and elimination. The Assembly's agenda is at risk of imploding under its own weight.

If Member States had been willing, this resolution could have done more to streamline the agenda. More could have been done to empower the General Committee to make more aggressive proposals to manage the Assembly's agenda. We also support assistance to the President in carrying out his important duties. We can think of no more important responsibility of the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services than to provide this support, and, because of its priority, it should come through and within existing resources.

We look forward to the report of the Secretary-General on the proposal to split the General Assembly's work into two sessions. We fully support efforts to streamline General Assembly activities and are interested in assisting other delegations, as well as our own, in coping with the onerous burdens of seemingly perpetual meetings. But we must be sure that this proposal will be part of the solution we all seek. To garner United States support, this initiative must be carefully costed out, the conflicts with other United Nations bodies' schedules resolved, and safeguards put in place to ensure that doubling the time for the Assembly's work does not lead to an explosion of its agenda.

Adjusting the Assembly's schedule to facilitate easier digestion of its unwieldy agenda is not the answer. Scheduling changes must be accompanied by significant streamlining and other process reforms.

My delegation again commends the President for his efforts to better this institution so it truly can perform the function that it is chartered to do, and looks forward to a continued aggressive reform agenda.

Mr. Doig (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the 19 member States of the Rio Group — Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Uruguay, Venezuela and my own country, Peru — I should like warmly to congratulate you, Sir, and to express our gratitude to you for the work you have done jointly with the facilitators, which made it possible to adopt by consensus the resolution on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly.

We believe that the successful outcome of this phase of the exercise, which you, Sir, led with energy and determination, demonstrates the important role of the General Assembly in strengthening the multilateral system and, through the assumption of effective political leadership, in carrying out the principal functions of the Organization.

The Rio Group has actively participated in the negotiation process and would like to commend the ongoing willingness of the six facilitators to engage in dialogue and to seek consensus, and also welcomes the positive spirit of cooperation that prevailed and made possible, in a relatively short time, this important step forward.

The members of the Rio Group would therefore like to reaffirm their willingness to continue to contribute resolutely, in upcoming phases, to the full implementation of those decisions as well as to the definition and adoption of new measures aimed at achieving our ultimate goal, which is substantially to revitalize the General Assembly.

Mr. Benmehidi (Algeria): The Non-Aligned Movement Working Group on the Revitalization of the General Assembly and the Reform of the United Nations welcomes the adoption by consensus of the draft resolution contained in document A/58/L.49/Rev.1 on the revitalization of the General Assembly.

The Non-Aligned Movement Working Group wishes to commend you, Mr. President, on the relentless efforts you have made and the strong determination you have shown in advancing the process of the revitalization of the General Assembly, so as to enhance its authority, role and effectiveness, and to improve its efficiency.

We would like also to extend our appreciation to all delegations and groups of Member States for their positive and constructive contributions and for the flexibility they have shown during the consultations, which made it possible to reach, at the end of this session, a consensus on this important issue.

The adoption of this important resolution indeed constitutes a significant step towards our common goal of revitalizing the General Assembly as outlined in paragraph 30 of the Millennium Declaration.

A number of resolutions have been adopted by the General Assembly since the early 1990s which contain important measures aimed at revitalizing the General Assembly and upon which we have built in elaborating the resolution we have just adopted.

It is, however, extremely important to underline the need to ensure the full implementation of the different provisions of this resolution and, more importantly, to pursue efforts to advance the process of revitalization in the coming years.

I would like to assure you, Sir, of the full confidence and cooperation of the Non-Aligned Movement Working Group in your undertakings in the coming months in the context of the follow-up of some provisions of this resolution, particularly those related to rescheduling the work of the Main Committees, which is, as you know, of utmost importance for the Non-Aligned Movement.

Mr. Gatilov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian delegation associated itself with the consensus on resolution A/58/L.49/Rev.1, in view of the importance of achieving the goal of revitalizing the General Assembly. We believe that the recommendations contained in the resolution will make it possible to improve the methods of work of the General Assembly and will also increase the effectiveness of the United Nations in general.

We take note of the fact that the implementation of the resolution will have certain financial implications. We therefore believe that we must find ways of covering these extra expenditure, for instance, from existing availabilities within the general budget of the Organization.

Mr. Wang Guangya (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on the successful adoption of the resolution on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly. The credit for this hard-won result is due primarily to the general membership for its support and cooperation; to your sustained attention and strong leadership, Mr. President; and to the hard work of all six coordinators.

The adoption of this resolution fully demonstrates the support of all Member States for the revitalization of the General Assembly and their commitment to multilateralism. This is undoubtedly one of the major achievements of this current session of the General Assembly in the area of United Nations reform. Indeed, today is a memorable day worth celebrating.

China attaches great importance to and has always supported the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, and it has been an active participant in the discussions. We believe that this revitalization will contribute not only to an enhanced overall coordination of the United Nations system by the General Assembly and to greater effectiveness and efficiency of its work, but also to a strengthened role of the United Nations in promoting multilateralism.

The various proposals contained in the resolution with regard to the strengthening of the presidency of the General Assembly, the enhancing of the cooperation between the General Assembly and the Council, streamlining the agenda of the Assembly, reducing the volume of documentation and improving implementation of the General Assembly resolutions, as well as considering rescheduling the regular sessions, are doable and well targeted. If successfully implemented, they would undoubtedly help strengthen the role and the position of the General Assembly.

Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly is an ongoing and gradual process. The adoption of this resolution in no way means the end of our work in this area; rather, it should be viewed as a new point of departure. China is prepared, together with others, to continue to support the work of the President of the General Assembly and to press the Assembly to make continued progress, to strengthen the role of the United Nations and to safeguard multilateralism through concrete actions.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote.

I am aware that it would be expected that I should make a statement at this stage. Having given this matter due consideration, I think the best statement that I can make is that we should all give ourselves a round of applause for the tremendous effort we have made here today.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 55.

Postponement of the date of recess

The President: Before we proceed further, I should like to draw the attention of members to the date of recess of the current session. Members will recall that, at its 75th plenary meeting, on 17 December 2003, the General Assembly decided that the fifty-eighth session would recess on Monday, 22 December 2003. However, in view of the work that remains to be done for this part of the session, I should like to propose to the Assembly that it postpone the date of recess of the current session to Tuesday, 23 December 2003.

In the absence of objection, may I take it that the Assembly agrees to that proposal?

It was so decided (decision 58/502).

Agenda item 22 (*continued*)

Assistance in mine action

Draft resolution (A/58/L.50)

The President: Members will recall that the General Assembly held its debate on this agenda item at its 56th and 58th plenary meetings, on 5 and 6 November 2003.

I now give the floor to the representative of Italy to introduce draft resolution A/58/L.50.

Mr. Alessandro (Italy): On behalf of the European Union and the other sponsors, I have the honour to introduce the draft resolution entitled "Assistance in mine action", contained in document A/58/L.50. Since the submission of the draft resolution, the following countries have joined the list of sponsors: Andorra, Austria, Estonia, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Mali, Monaco, Mozambique, New Zealand, Peru, the Republic of Korea, San Marino, Senegal, Slovenia, Sweden, Thailand, Tunisia and the United Kingdom.

After the draft resolution was submitted, three small changes were made to paragraph 24 by common agreement: the words "possibility of" were inserted before the word "strengthening"; the word "of" was deleted after the word "strengthening"; and the word "and" was inserted before the expression "non-discriminatory". Paragraph 24, as revised, should thus read:

> "Invites States to explore the possibility of strengthening internationally negotiated and non-discriminatory legal instruments that address landmines and other unexploded ordnance, as well as their victims".

In addition, I have two corrections to make. In the eleventh preambular paragraph, as agreed during informal consultations, the word "noting" in the seventh line should be replaced by the words "taking note also"; and in operative paragraph 15, as also agreed during informal consultations, the word "notes" should be replaced by the words "takes note of".

The draft resolution before us today reflects the outcome of constructive consultations with interested delegations. I should like to thank all the delegations that participated in the negotiations and contributed to the text. Interested delegations have worked hard with the European Union and the other sponsors to update and improve the text while maintaining consensus. My delegation is particularly pleased that consensus was eventually achieved on all new elements of the draft resolution.

Allow me to highlight briefly the main elements of this draft resolution, which addresses the issue of assistance in mine action at the international, regional and national levels through the coordinated intervention of States, the United Nations, regional and subregional organizations and relevant non-governmental organizations.

The text recognizes the primary role and responsibility of Member States in mine action assistance as well as the significant assisting role of the United Nations. It calls specifically on mine-affected countries to assume their national responsibilities in resolving the landmine problem, and it appeals to donors to continue and, whenever possible, to increase their international assistance through reliable, predictable and timely contributions. The draft resolution also underlines the humanitarian imperative of mine action and the importance of integrating mine action activities into broader humanitarian strategies, especially in emergency situations.

Among the new elements introduced in the draft resolution, I wish to draw attention to the encouragement of all efforts to conduct mine action in accordance with accepted standards; to the calling on all parties to a conflict to incorporate mine action provisions, where relevant, into ceasefire and peace agreements; and to the recognition of the potential of mine action as a peace- and confidence-building measure in post-conflict situations. The draft resolution also stresses the pressing need to urge non-State actors to halt, immediately and unconditionally, the deployment of mines and other associated explosiv devices.

Finally, while expressing appreciation to th Secretary-General for the finalization of an emergenc response plan, for the report's (A/58/260) provision o mine action assistance and for the submission of revised mine action strategy (A/58/260/Add.1), th draft resolution encourages the Secretary-General t continue to propose specific provisions in this are when making recommendations to the Security Counc for peacekeeping operations.

The European Union and the other sponsors hop that this draft resolution can be adopted without a vot as in past years. That would allow the Genera Assembly to send a strong message of support to a those engaged in this critical area, where, sadly, th needs continue to grow.

The President: We shall now proceed to conside draft resolution A/58/L.50, as orally revised an corrected.

One representative has asked to speak i explanation of vote before the voting. May I remin delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 1 minutes and should be made by delegations from the seats.

I call on the representative of Israel.

Ms. Tennenbaum (Israel): Despite ou dissatisfaction with the language of certain sections o draft resolution A/58/L.50, Israel has decided to joi the consensus out of our deep concern for the grav humanitarian consequences resulting from th irresponsible use of mines, booby traps and othe explosive devices. My delegation believes that consensus on this issue will help us to better meet th challenge of preventing and minimizing huma suffering in this regard.

Aware of alarming changes in world event especially the growing threat of global terrorism, Israe sought necessary and timely changes to the annual tex on this issue. As such, my delegation introduced a alternative text to the fourteenth preambular paragrap that was, unfortunately, not accepted by delegations Israel remains concerned that the language in th fourteenth preambular paragraph does not adequatel address the need for Governments to take firm an decisive action against non-State actors.

Only global action can quell the humanitarian threat posed by mines, booby traps and other explosive devices. Today, that threat emanates not only from State actors, but also from terrorist organizations that operate on a global scale. When we use the term "non-State actors", we are referring to terrorist organizations and not to non-governmental organizations, as one might assume. While Member States use mines as a pre-emptive measure according to the accepted provisions of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, terrorist organizations use mines, booby traps and other explosive devices in, inter alia, densely populated areas in order to cause maximum death and destruction to innocent civilians. The danger of allowing these non-State actors to acquire mines is grave and severe. One has to remember that, while we talk about humanitarian consequences — as this draft resolution seeks to address — we should not forget the innocent civilian victims of these condemned and morally repugnant actions carried out by terrorist groups.

I would like to conclude by expressing once again our disappointment that the wording of the fourteenth preambular paragraph is not sufficiently strong in light of reality. Global terrorism constitutes a threat to all Member States and all Member States must take concerted and committed actions against non-State actors. We appreciate the efforts of those Member States that worked to address those timely concerns and we hope that, next year, additional Member States will recognize the necessity for textual changes that reflect that global menace.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/58/L.50, as orally revised and corrected.

I should like to announce that, since the introduction of the draft resolution, Bolivia and Cyprus have become co-sponsors of A/58/L.50.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/58/L.50, as orally revised and corrected?

Draft resolution A/58/L.50, as orally revised and corrected, was adopted (resolution 58/127).

The President: Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to explain their position on the resolution just adopted.

Mr. Gala López (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): My country has always given due importance and attention to the legitimate humanitarian concerns of the international community relating to the indiscriminate and irresponsible use of anti-personnel landmines and to the ineffectiveness of demining efforts in post-conflict situations. Given the importance and sensitivity of the issue, particularly for those countries most affected, Cuba decided once again to join the consensus on the resolution.

This year, the main sponsors of the resolution included a significant number of changes, some of which have unfortunately led to controversy and jeopardized the traditional consensus enjoyed by the resolution, although a compromise formula was ultimately achieved. Such was the case of new language in some paragraphs referring to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction — on which our position is well known — and in others that makes general reference to international legal instruments on landmines.

My delegation reiterates that Protocol II of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects has already established the necessary prohibitions and regulations on landmines. We believe that negotiating new legal instruments for such weapons or modifying existing instruments only weakens the Convention — particularly Protocol II in its amended form — rather than strengthening it. The current international legal framework for landmines, as established in Protocol II, is adequate. Our main purpose in this regard should therefore be to ensure the full implementation of its provisions.

It might be possible to strengthen the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons should other countries decide to accede to it, which we believe to be a strictly sovereign choice. Similarly, the decision to strengthen and broaden existing international legal instruments on landmines is in all cases to be made by States parties. Consequently, any specific discussion on

this matter must take place within that framework and not in the General Assembly.

The resolution on this matter should not continue to encroach on matters that are not within its purview and should focus on humanitarian issues relating to landmines, which have always been its central theme. It is within the framework of the First Committee that legal and security matters relating to landmines should be addressed. Two resolutions already exist in the First Committee on those issues. We will continue fully to support all efforts that, while maintaining the essential balance between humanitarian issues and matters of national security, seek to eliminate the awful humanitarian consequences for civilians of many countries of the indiscriminate and irresponsible use of anti-personnel landmines.

Mr. Najafi (Islamic Republic of Iran): The Islamic Republic of Iran, as a mine-affected country, attaches great importance to mine-action activities, particularly their humanitarian aspects. Landmines and unexploded ordinance have contaminated Iran's border with Iraq as the result of the eight-year imposed war. Unfortunately, due to this contamination, mine casualties continue to be a problem for my country. My delegation therefore very much shares the sentiments expressed in the resolution that has just been adopted by the General Assembly.

In our view, mine action refers only to those activities geared towards addressing the problems faced by populations as a result of landmine contamination. Accordingly, the resolution on assistance in mine action should focus on the humanitarian dimension. Other aspects of landmines are currently being considered by various United Nations bodies in the framework of a number of other resolutions.

International cooperation in the field of mine detection, mine-clearance equipment and technologies which can facilitate the clearing of mine-affected areas, as well as the exploration of alternatives to landmines aimed at ensuring the minimum security requirements of borders in countries with long land borders — which could reduce the deployment of mines — are among the practical ways and means of diminishing the threat of landmines to the safety, health and lives of people. The promotion of activities in those fields could be of fundamental help in mine-action efforts. We hope that in next year's draft resolution, more attention will be paid to those fields so as to facilitate mine-action activities.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 22?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 44 (*continued*)

Culture of peace

Draft resolution (A/58/L.52)

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Pakistan to introduce draft resolution A/58/L.52.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): I have the honour, on behalf of the delegations of Afghanistan, Algeria, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, China, Djibouti, Egypt, Georgia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Malaysia, Morocco, the Philippines, Qatar, the Sudan, Tunisia and my own delegation, Pakistan, to introduce the draft resolution contained in document A/58/L.52, entitled "Promotion of religious and cultural understanding, harmony and cooperation".

The advent of the new millennium brought to an end a century marked by ideological confrontation, institutionalized discrimination and genocidal wars. It was expected that a new era of peaceful coexistence, human respect and social justice would dawn. This ardent desire of mankind was manifested in the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace (resolution 53/243), adopted by the General Assembly on 13 September 1999.

The Declaration established a new paradigm of basic values and norms for the twenty-first century, including: respect for the promotion of human rights; a commitment to the peaceful settlement of conflicts; and adherence to the principles of freedom, justice, democracy, tolerance, solidarity, cooperation, pluralism, cultural diversity, dialogue and understanding at all levels of society and among nations.

It was expected that, following those guiding principles, civilizations, faiths and peoples would come closer and promote a culture of peace. Instead, the world has since witnessed a resurgence of religious and cultural intolerance. Misunderstanding and suspicion between faiths and cultures in various parts of the world has been further accentuated, particularly in the aftermath of the tragic attacks of September 2001. Despite declarations by world leaders, discrimination, mistreatment and hate have proliferated. Unless addressed squarely and checked effectively, this state of affairs could lead to interminable conflict and strife. The Secretary-General, in a letter to the Islamic Summit Conference held recently in Malaysia, rightly pointed out that the rising hostility between Islam and the West is ugly, dangerous and wrong.

All religions and cultures share a common set of universal values. Religion and culture must not, therefore, be allowed to become a source of division. Cooperation among, rather than a clash of, civilizations must be the paradigm for this new century. We must assert the indivisibility of the human race. We must cherish unity in diversity — an expression, indeed, of divine wisdom — as a treasured gift, not as a threat. The promotion of understanding, harmony and cooperation among religions and cultures is imperative if we are to lift the veil of ignorance, misconception and prejudice, which have so tragically intensified in recent times.

The President of Pakistan, Mr. Pervez Musharraf, addressing the General Assembly, has consistently urged the world community to bridge the gulf of misunderstanding between Islam and the West. Last year, he identified the promotion of religious and cultural understanding, harmony and cooperation as one way forward. Building on this, he outlined, in his address to the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, a concrete strategy for enlightened moderation. Socio-economic emancipation, human resources development and the just and peaceful resolution of disputes are salient features of that strategy.

The Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace encourages Member States to take action for the promotion of a culture of peace at the national, as well as the international, level. Accordingly, last year Pakistan initiated a draft resolution on the promotion of religious and cultural understanding, harmony and cooperation. Extensive open-ended consultations have been held with a view to evolving a consensus text.

We are grateful to the other sponsors for their invaluable support. We also appreciate the contribution of all other delegations that remained constructively engaged with the process of consultation. Their useful comments and proposals were taken into consideration and have further improved the text. We would like to express our appreciation for the flexibility and understanding displayed by all delegations, which enabled us to evolve such a consensus document. We hope the text will be adopted by the Assembly without a vote.

The draft resolution emphasizes the importance of promoting understanding, tolerance and friendship, and affirms the significance of dialogue as a tool to translate shared values of religions and cultures into action. It recognizes that respect for religious and cultural diversity in an increasingly globalizing world helps in creating an environment conducive to an exchange of the experiences of various societies, cultures and faiths. It reaffirms that promotion and protection of the rights of minorities contribute to political and social stability and peace. In that context, it urges States to ensure that multicultural diversity is reflected in their political and legal systems. Highlighting the importance of education in building a culture of peace, it encourages Governments to promote understanding and tolerance through education. It calls upon all States to respect and protect religious sites against damage and destruction. It urges States to combat incitement to or acts of violence motivated by hatred and intolerance based on religion and culture, which may cause discord and disunity within and among societies. In the end, requesting the widest dissemination of the relevant United Nations materials related to the draft resolution, the text requests the Secretary-General to present a report to the next session of the General Assembly on the implementation of this draft resolution.

The adoption of this draft resolution by consensus would be a timely and authoritative rejection by the international community of the message of intolerance, hatred and discrimination purveyed by a few extremist elements in various societies, cultures and faiths. Its adoption would also make an important contribution to advancing the goals of universal understanding, harmony and peace as well as security and prosperity.

The President: Before we proceed further, I should like to consult the Assembly with a view to proceeding immediately to consider the draft resolution contained in document A/58/L.52. In that connection, since the draft resolution was circulated only today, it would be necessary to waive the relevant provision of rule 78 of the rules of procedure, which reads as follows:

> "As a general rule, no proposal shall be discussed or put to the vote at any meeting of the General Assembly unless copies of it have been circulated to all delegations not later than the day preceding the meeting."

Unless I hear any objection, I shall take it that the Assembly agrees with this proposal.

It was so decided.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/58/L.52, entitled "Promotion of religious and cultural understanding, harmony and cooperation".

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/58/L.52?

Draft resolution A/58/L.52 was adopted (resolution 58/128).

The President: I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in explanation of position on the resolution just adopted. May I remind delegations that explanations of position are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Cavallari (Italy): I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the European Union with regard to the resolution entitled "Promotion of religious and cultural understanding, harmony and cooperation", just adopted by the General Assembly in plenary meeting under item 44 of its agenda. The acceding countries Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia; the candidate countries Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro and The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; and the countries members of the European Free Trade Association Iceland and Norway declare that they align themselves with this statement.

The European Union believes firmly in tolerance, non-discrimination, freedom of expression and freedom of religion or belief. The European Union also believes strongly in the value of a dialogue among civilizations and in the need for understanding and cooperation among different religions and cultures. From the outset, however, the European Union was concerned that a further resolution of this nature would reproduce or overlap several existing related processes and initiatives already undertaken in this area. Despite those reservations, the European Union engaged in a positive and constructive manner in the negotiations on the draft resolution. After its adoption by consensus by the General Assembly, we should like to sincerely thank Pakistan and all the other sponsors of the draft resolution for their flexibility during those negotiations and for having accepted many amendments proposed by the European Union.

While expressing satisfaction at some of the changes introduced in this resolution, the European Union would like to bring to the attention of the General Assembly its concern with regard to some parts of the text, which still fail to refer adequately to the universality of human rights. We believe the resolution should have more clearly reaffirmed the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, in accordance with article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We are also of the opinion that the resolution should have focused more on freedom of expression, as described in article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

The European Union, furthermore, has some concern about the concept of harmony in the resolution, because it is a rather vague and ill-defined concept. The European Union would like to reiterate that that concept cannot and should not be read as limiting in any way freedom of expression or full enjoyment of all human rights by persons belonging to minority groups, by non-believers or by any other individual.

Fully confident that those aspects will be rightly reconsidered in the near future, we feel the need to restate that the European Union is fully committed to the principle that all human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated and that, as such, they constitute an international standard with which all States should comply. Indeed, that very notion is set forth in the Universal Declaration of

Human Rights, which is proclaimed as a common standard of achievement for all people and all nations. Therefore, the European Union remains convinced that any action taken by States aimed at promoting and protecting the full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, and any action undertaken to prevent violations thereof, should be undertaken in conformity with international human rights standards.

Mr. Gopinathan (India): My delegation requested the floor to make a general statement in explanation of position after the adoption of the resolution contained in document A/58/L.52, entitled "Promotion of religious and cultural understanding, harmony and cooperation", under agenda item 44, "Culture of peace". My delegation went along with the adoption of the resolution without a vote in spite of the shortcomings and deficiencies that we perceived in the text. We should like to refer to them briefly.

When the idea of such a draft resolution was first proposed at the fifty-seventh session, we were told that it would be a first step in the collective fight of the international community against global terrorism. It is unfortunate that the sponsors refused to include in the text any reference to the global combat against terrorism. The resolution does not place adequate emphasis, in our view, on the need to promote actively ideas of tolerance, pluralism and respect for diversity.

The resolution falls seriously short in dealing with the question of promoting educational policies and programmes, teaching methods and curriculums that discourage ideologies of extremism, intolerance and violence and that actively promote values of non-discrimination, diversity, tolerance, pluralism, understanding and respect for one another's religions, faiths and beliefs.

In India's view, the resolution does not address itself adequately to the need for strengthening democracy and democratic institutions as one of the most effective means of promoting religious and cultural understanding. Effective democratic institutions which are fully participatory will help avoid the marginalization and exclusion of, and discrimination against, specific sections of society. It is regrettable that the sponsors did not incorporate a reference to these issues in the resolution, notwithstanding the fact that language from declarations and earlier resolutions in the General Assembly, the Commission on Human Rights and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization exists and was made available to them.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of position.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 44.

Agenda item 46 (*continued*)

Towards global partnerships

Draft resolution (A/58/L.51)

The President: Members will recall that the General Assembly held its debate on this agenda item at its 40th plenary meeting, on 22 October 2003.

I give the floor to the representative of Italy to introduce draft resolution A/58/L.51.

Mr. Bernardini (Italy): I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the European Union to introduce draft resolution A/58/L.51. The acceding countries Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia, the candidate countries Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey, the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro, and the European Free Trade Association country Norway, declare that they align themselves with this statement.

I should like to announce that, since the publication of draft resolution A/58/L.51, the following countries have become sponsors: Albania, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Bangladesh, Belarus, Bulgaria, Canada, the Central African Republic, Cyprus, Fiji, the Gambia, Georgia, Ghana, Grenada, Guinea-Bissau, Iceland, India, Israel, Liechtenstein, the Marshall Islands, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Peru, the Philippines, the Republic of Moldova, Rwanda, Serbia and Montenegro, Sierra Leone, Singapore, South Africa, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Tunisia and Uzbekistan.

Draft resolution A/58/L.51 was negotiated in a great spirit of cooperation and flexibility on the part of all delegations, and we thank all the partners that constructively contributed to this positive outcome. The draft resolution, which builds upon resolutions 55/215 and 56/76, reflects the positive developments in

the United Nations global partnership activities, recognizing the relevance of the contribution of the private sector, non-governmental organizations and civil society to the collective achievement of the Organization's purposes. The core element around which the draft resolution has evolved over the past four years is the exploration of the potential that partnerships offer for achieving important political goals of the United Nations, while at the same time guarding the integrity of the Organization and the transparency of the process.

The draft resolution reflects and acknowledges the fact that the United Nations and the private sector have developed valuable and diverse initiatives and that nowadays partnerships are an integral part of the work of many United Nations organizations, including funds and programmes, particularly those with on-the-ground capabilities to deliver. The new text also sets out a number of criteria which the General Assembly regards as essential for the achievement of the partnership's purpose.

The European Union has always considered partnerships to be important steps for international cooperation for sustainable development. In order to achieve the ambitious goals set out in the Millennium Declaration, we must seek new solutions and methods of work. This will be possible only with the active participation of all stakeholders in the development process. This draft resolution shows the value of that concept, as it acknowledges the importance that partnerships have for the international community.

Before the adoption of the draft resolution, we would like to draw attention to some of the key concepts enshrined therein. Partnerships are to contribute to the realization of the goals and programmes of the United Nations. In fact, the principles and approaches that govern such partnerships should be built on the firm foundations of the purposes and principles of the United Nations. The Bretton Woods institutions, as well as the World Trade Organization, are invited to continue to explore possibilities of enhancing the use of partnerships to better implement their goals and programmes. The private sector is encouraged to take into account not only the economic and financial, but also the developmental, social, human rights, gender and environmental implications of their undertakings. There is a clear recognition of the importance of accepting and implementing the principle of good corporate citizenship, also welcomed by the International Conference on Financing for Development.

The draft resolution takes note of the work done by initiatives such as the Global Compact and the United Nations Fund for International Partnerships, as well as the multitude of partnerships originating in Johannesburg and those established at the field level. The draft resolution stresses the importance of partnerships being designed in a transparent and accountable manner. The bodies within the United Nations that are engaged in partnerships are called upon to ensure the Organization's integrity and independence. The draft resolution acknowledges that successful partnerships require specific skills, and the Secretary-General is called upon to continue to support and to develop further such skills through appropriate training and the sharing of best practices.

The European Union looks forward to staying engaged on this matter and to further discussing the importance of global partnerships in the near future. The draft resolution provides an opportunity to generate momentum to build on the substantial progress achieved and to move the process forward. We are pleased to see that other countries, as well as the major stakeholders, civil society and the private sector, are taking a proactive role. We call on all partners to continue to show the same sense of commitment and support in order to achieve the ambitious goals set out in the Millennium Declaration.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/58/L.51.

Before proceeding to take action on the draft resolution, I should like to announce that since its introduction the following countries have become sponsors: Dominica, Ecuador, Grenada, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Mali, the Republic of Korea, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, the Solomon Islands and Trinidad and Tobago.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/58/L.51?

Draft resolution A/58/L.51 was adopted (resolution 58/129).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 46?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 4.45 p.m.